Informational Points on HB 4770, HB 4771 and HB 4772

Provided by the Negligence Law Section, State Bar of Michigan June 13, 2013

The Negligence Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan represents both plaintiff and defense attorneys who practice in the areas of civil liability. Our clients are both accident victims and defendants, and our goal is to ensure that our civil justice system works efficiently and fairly for both parties of a lawsuit. The opinion of the Negligence Law Section is separate from and does not necessarily represent the views of the State Bar of Michigan as a whole.

The Negligence Law Section worked with Representatives Graves, Lipton and Cotter on this package of bills with the goal of sheltering accident victims from solicitations from numerous providers of services, be they legal, medical, or other. We feel that restricting such solicitations for a period no less than 30 days after an injury occurs will protect the public from receiving a myriad of advertisements and promotional literature that can be confusing. Moreover, we feel that granting such a grace period will help improve the public standing of members of the legal, medical, home service and other professions who are often decried for overzealous solicitation of injury victims.

In addition to making it illegal to solicit injury victims for a period of 30 days, the package of bills would also restrict public access to police reports of auto accidents for 30 days. Since many solicitors use police accident reports to identify potential clients, this prohibition will help cut off access to that information. We are hopeful that by restricting solicitation and access to police reports for 30 days, injury victims will have more time to assess their options before being deluged with sometimes conflicting materials.

None of these bills prevent an injury victim from seeking out medical or legal advice on their own volition. There are also safeguards to make sure that police reports are available with no delay to persons with a legitimate need, such as the accident victim themselves or members of their families. The goal of these bills is not to restrict a victim's access to the care or advice they need. Rather they seek merely to prevent their mailboxes from being flooded with solicitations sometimes even before they return home from the hospital.

The Negligence Law Section is grateful to Representatives Graves, Lipton and Cotter for their leadership on this issue, and we urge members of the Legislature to support these bills.

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